



**PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

Second Session
Fiftieth General Assembly

**Proceedings of the Standing Committee on
Government Services**

May 12, 2025 - Issue 19

Department of Digital Government and Service NL

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Assembly
Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Digital Government and Service NL

Chair: Lucy Stoyles, MHA

Vice-Chair: Lin Paddock, MHA

Members: Joedy Wall, MHA
Perry Trimper, MHA
Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA
Jamie Korab, MHA
James Dinn, MHA

Clerk of the Committee: Mark Jerrett (A)

Appearing:

Department of Digital Government and Service NL

Hon. Sarah Stoodley, Minister

Sean Dutton, Deputy Minister

Gail Boland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Digital Government and Services

Loyola Power, Assistant Deputy Minister, Regulatory Affairs

Jennifer Torrville, Departmental Controller

Tina Newhook, Director of Communications

Also Present

Hon. Steve Crocker, MHA, Minister

Hon. Fred Hutton, MHA, Minister

Hon. John Haggie, MHA, Minister

Hon. Elvis Loveless, MHA, Minister

Loyola O'Driscoll, MHA

Jordan Brown, MHA

Jim Locke, Government Members' Caucus

Darrell Hynes, Official Opposition Caucus

Scott Fleming, Third Party Caucus

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Steve Crocker, MHA for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verte, substitutes for Jamie, Korab, MHA for Waterford Valley, for a portion of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Fred Hutton, MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, substitutes for Jamie Korab, MHA for Waterford Valley, for a portion of the meeting.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, John Haggie, MHA for Gander, substitutes for Perry Trimper, MHA for Lake Melville.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Loyola O'Driscoll, MHA for Ferryland, substitutes for Joedy Wall, MHA for Cape St. Francis.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Elvis Loveless, MHA for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, substitutes for Sherry Gambin-Walsh, MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's.

Pursuant to Standing Order 68, Jordan Brown, MHA for Labrador West, substitutes for Jim Dinn, MHA for St. John's Centre.

CHAIR (Stoyles): Order, please!

Good morning, everybody, and welcome. I think this is the last Estimates for this session of the House of Assembly, so I thank everybody for coming this morning.

First, I just have a few housekeeping items. Of course, when you're speaking to wave, and we ask nobody to adjust the chairs. The water coolers are on both sides. Each time you speak, say your name and wait for the light. Sometimes, because we've got a new system in place, it might take a few extra seconds for the light to come on before you speak, so wait for the light to come on before you speak and identify yourself each time.

Next, we're going to do the substitutions. For MHA Wall, we have MHA O'Driscoll; for MHA Trimper, we've got Minister Haggie; for MHA Sherry Gambin-Walsh, we have Minister Loveless; for MHA Dinn, we have

MHA Brown; and for MHA Korab, we have two filling in: Crocker and Hutton. That's it.

We have the minutes from the previous Estimates. I'm going to ask for a mover and a seconder for those.

MHA Loveless and MHA Brown.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

CHAIR: Next, we're going to ask everybody to identify themselves before we get started, just for the record. We're going to start over on this side.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Loyola O'Driscoll, Ferryland District.

D. HYNES: Darrell Hynes, Research and Legislative Affairs for the Opposition Office.

L. PADDOCK: MHA Lin Paddock, Baie Verte - Green Bay.

J. BROWN: MHA Brown, Labrador West.

S. FLEMING: Scott Fleming, Research and Policy, NDP Caucus.

S. CROCKER: Steve Crocker, MHA, Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

J. HAGGIE: John Haggie, MHA, Gander.

J. LOCKE: Jim Locke, Government Members' Office.

E. LOVELESS: Elvis Loveless, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

CHAIR: We're going to come back to this side.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Sarah Stoodley, Minister of Government Modernization and Service Delivery.

S. DUTTON: Sean Dutton, Deputy Minister.

L. POWER: Loyola Power, Assistant Deputy Minister.

G. BOLAND: Gail Boland, Assistant Deputy Minister.

J. TORRAVILLE: Jennifer Torraville, Departmental Controller.

T. NEWHOOK: Tina Newhook, Director of Communications.

CHAIR: Everybody is done? Okay, so we're doing Digital Government, and I'm going to ask the minister to have a few opening remarks.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Just for clarification for anyone listening in, in the Estimates and in the budget, the department is called Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador. As of Friday, we are changing the department to the Department of Government Modernization and Service Delivery. But that, I guess, as far as the Estimates today are concerned, it's the same numbers that's in the government Estimates book under Digital Government and Service NL. This was the department I was most recently in after my former department and these are my fourth Estimates today for this sitting of the House.

So I'm very pleased to have the team here with me. They already introduced themselves. The Department of Government Modernization and Service Delivery does incredible work to protect residents and businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador, and a lot of public safety work. This department is responsible for more than 175 pieces of legislation and regulation. Everything from public health and safety, occupational health and safety, highway and road safety, environmental protection, protection services for consumers and financial issues.

This department has historically been viewed as kind of the window for government service delivery. So I think that's incredibly important, something we'll be certainly taking a closer look at moving forward. We do spend a lot of time focusing on modernizing our services, making them easier for the public, removing unnecessary red tape, moving things online, making things easier for people so they can do things in their home at their convenience so they don't have to go into an office, or they only have to go to an office when necessary.

We have made significant strides in exceeding government's initial 75 per cent target for increasing the number of online services. We continue to see an increase in the use of online services with over 400,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians registered for MyGovNL, where they can complete a range of services, and the team are always adding more services to MyGovNL.

Then in terms of public safety, I know this department does incredible work. I mean, I've worked on the *Highway Traffic Act*. Every sitting of the House, it seems like we're bringing forward new legislation. I would say we have, if not the strongest, certainly some of the strongest road safety legislation in Canada.

We also have some of the toughest impaired driving laws. We have the strictest penalties for excessive speeding, racing and stunting, and we have the strictest for young drivers, in particular, speeding, racing and stunting.

We've enacted penalties for driving violations, increasing fines, demerit points, and time frames for vehicle impoundment to deter dangerous and life-threatening behaviours. Building on that, a project very close to my heart, through *Budget 2025*, we are putting forward an investment of \$3.9 million to help the launch of speed cameras in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The speed cameras will come through revenue, but obviously there's a cost

associated with that, so the cost would be borne by this department and then the revenue just goes into general revenues. Ideally, there are no revenues, so that would be a great problem to have, but the cost comes in this department.

That has been a huge piece of work for this department as well as Justice and Public Safety, and staff in both departments have worked tirelessly on this initiative and I want to thank them for their hard work.

Obviously, I think we all understand the value of speed cameras. I think I've never gotten so many letters from municipalities when I was in this seat previously. Everyone wants a speed camera in their municipality, on their road. So I think it will be a huge safety improvement for Newfoundland and Labrador.

In terms of public safety, this department has made many changes to strengthen consumer protection: changes to the *Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act* and regulations; to the *Insurance Companies Act*; to the *Life Insurance Act*, *Mortgage Brokerages and Brokers Act* and regulations; the *Payday Loans Regulations* – which I just want to give a shout-out to the Chair for bringing to our attention, which we strengthened the – not the Payday, the –

OFFICIAL: High-Cost Credit.

S. STOODLEY: – the *High-Cost Credit Product Regulations*. Yes, thank you to the Chair for bringing that to our attention – the *Petroleum Products Act* and regulations; the *Real Estate Trading Act, 2019*; and the *Securities Act*.

I just want to give a shout-out to our over 400 hard-working employees located in offices throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and say thank you for the work that they do over the past year. A lot of the things you wouldn't think about, like when there's a highway accident, some of our team are first responders. They deal with a lot. Wherever there's a catastrophic event, or hurricane our team are on the ground first

and almost sometimes last as well. So they do an incredible amount of work to protect the people of the province, and I want to thank them for that.

I'm happy to answer any questions, the team and I, as we move forward. Obviously, I've been out of the picture for a while, but the team are up to speed as usual.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to ask the Clerk to call the first headings.

CLERK (Jerrett): Digital Government and Service NL, subheads 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03.

We're going to start with 15 minutes for the first speaker, then 10 minutes after that for every other speaker. Just a reminder, we're only doing those subheadings, and then we will move on to the next set of subheadings and so on until we're finished.

So we're going to start with MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to be here this morning. Again, I'd like to thank the department for the work that they put in here and all their employees as well. I heard you mention 400 employees, so I certainly congratulate them and thank them for everything they do.

First of all, I'd start with some general questions. How many vacancies does the department currently have, and can we have a list by division and position?

S. STOODLEY: Could I defer it to Sean Dutton, please?

S. DUTTON: I couldn't tell you the current number. I can tell you the number as of March 31. As of March 31, we had 60 vacancies across the department. They

were in a number of different divisions, and that information will be provided in the binder at the conclusion of the meeting.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Perfect.

Are all elevator inspections up to date, right now?

G. BOLAND: No.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many inspections are we behind right now? Last time I asked in the House of Assembly, it was up to 500. I just wonder if that's current or after getting smaller or higher.

G. BOLAND: We're looking at about 65 per cent behind in inspections.

S. STOODLEY: Do you want to elaborate on how we prioritize them or that kind of stuff?

G. BOLAND: With elevators, a part of the process every year, they have to renew the certification on the elevator itself. Currently, that process requires an inspection that can only be done by one of our three inspectors. As everybody would recall, last fall there were amendments to the *Public Safety Act* to allow us to be able to outsource that component.

The owners of these elevators already have service contracts with people like Otis, TKE, who are installing and maintaining and repairing the elevators. What these amendments would allow would be the TKE or the Otis people to be able to complete the inspection as part of the annual renewal process, and then submit a report to our chief inspector. They would review it, and if everything looks good, then the certification on the device would be renewed. If not, then our people would go out and do an inspection.

Any new devices that have never been operating before, that are brand new installed we would still have to do the inspection on those devices before they come into operation.

When I say we're about 65 per cent overdue, the majority are the devices that are just overdue for the annual renewal certification process. What we do is we would prioritize brand new devices and we would also prioritize if the devices are completely out of operation and have gone through repair.

In those situations, it's important to keep in mind that we cannot do an inspection until we've been notified by the contractor again, like TKE or Otis, that they've completed the work and they're ready for us to come in and do the inspection.

The 65 per cent, yes, some of it is because we are behind, but some of it is also because we're waiting for TKE or Otis or something like that to come and give us the green light to say yes, we're ready for an inspection.

In terms of the devices that are brand new or are completely not operating, we would prioritize based on hospitals, long-term care, those sorts of facilities.

L. O'DRISCOLL: You have three inspectors now. Any plans to hire any more? I mean, they're behind by a lot.

S. STOODLEY: We always have active job openings for elevator inspectors. If you know any, please, we will hire them.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, there were people emailing MHAs and salary was certainly one of the issues that they're dealing it. If you don't change that, then I think you're going to have the same issues, still going to have three. It's something that we should be looking at for sure if we're that many inspections behind. I mean, it's something you should look at.

S. STOODLEY: We do give them an elevated market adjustment and that goes through the government – we can't just hire people at whatever price we want to hire them. There are government HR, Treasury Board processes whereby we have to apply for a market differential. Someone has to look at what are they making, what's it going

to take to keep them. The elevator inspectors are given a market differential, as per the Treasury Board process, for assigning increased pay for hard-to-fill positions.

It's not not competitive, I guess; it's what the official government processes say an appropriate amount to pay them is, whether we agree with that or not.

L. O'DRISCOLL: The same thing stays true for some of the departments, you're up against competition is the problem and you're not going to get these workers. It's the same as the department of highways trying to get mechanics and they're up against all of the other companies that are in town paying more money. You're not getting them unless something changes.

All right, we'll move on. What inspections does the department do on personal care homes? How often and are they posted online?

G. BOLAND: With personal care homes, yes. The results of our inspections are posted online.

S. STOODLEY: What types of inspections?

G. BOLAND: Under memorandums of understanding with the Department of Health and Community Services, our environmental health officers would do public health types of inspections on personal care homes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right.

The elevator in this building here, it's been in the middle and it has been not moving for a long period of time. Obviously you can't do an inspection if you're waiting on parts, but is anybody checking to see what's holding that up or are they intending on not fixing it or what's the issue with that?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you. That's an excellent question.

This department does elevator inspections; we don't drive the fixing of broken elevators.

Transportation and Infrastructure oversees all the buildings, including this building, and they would drive getting the contractors in to fix the elevators and ordering the parts. We would do the inspection. It would be the building managers to drive fixing the elevators.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Who are coming in and out of here every day and no one has asked the question? The inspection is showing December 17, no one has asked, okay, when is this going to be done or what are we waiting on to get it fixed? It just sits there until – so no one is asking the question is what I'm asking? Somebody got to ask the questions.

S. STOODLEY: This department doesn't say, TI, when are you going to have the elevator fixed?

L. O'DRISCOLL: The inspection is due so is somebody asking that? The inspection is due for 2017.

S. STOODLEY: Sorry. Maybe I misunderstood.

S. DUTTON: There were repairs made to the East Block elevators in I think March. We had an inspector on site so inspections were carried out at that time. The inspection certificates are behind the security desk and anyone can ask to see them at the security desk.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Why were they moved from the elevators to the security desk? If you get on an elevator and it says right there it's inspected, is it taken out because we ask a question or why was that moved?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question but I can't answer it.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay. I'll move on to the next question.

S. DUTTON: I think it's just that it's easier to replace them than behind a glass covering in the elevators themselves.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

S. DUTTON: I do believe there was a sign, I don't know if it's still there, to indicate to people that they can go to the security desk.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, there is. There's a sign there, yeah. There is, yeah.

We did an ATIPP in December on aged vehicles used by highway enforcement officers showing the oldest is 14 years old and the majority are 10 years old and have over 400,000 kilometres, some as much as 500,000. Why hasn't the department replaced these vehicles?

S. DUTTON: The vehicle fleet is managed by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, thank you.

Are all our highway enforcement officer positions filled right now or up as of March 31?

S. STOODLEY: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: We do have a couple of vacancies, all of which are undergoing a competition process.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Whatever happened to the plans to enforce fines for violations of the landlords tenants act?

S. STOODLEY: The landlord tenant enforcement.

S. DUTTON: Yeah so, again, it's an ongoing process in terms of the, I guess, final steps in terms of the information. It's ongoing because it's data driven in terms of the assessments of the date. Based on that assessment, we take the various steps along the path so everything from the dispute resolution to an end piece in terms of if there's a violation where it's required some type of fine or something along that line.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Is the department still following the no-fault evictions? Are they still following that closely?

L. POWER: Yes, absolutely.

S. STOODLEY: The rules have not changed in terms of when a landlord or tenant can vacate the property.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, yeah.

So what's the current wait time for a hearing now in the landlords and tenants act?

L. POWER: The average number of days for a hearing is 20 days.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Is there a full complement of adjudicators at that?

L. POWER: Yes.

We still have ongoing vacancies as people move, but we have our complement focused on that area.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many is that? How many do you have? Do you know?

L. POWER: In terms of our adjudicators?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Adjudicators, yeah.

L. POWER: I don't have that. I can get it for you though.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, yeah.

How many complaints did your department receive last year?

L. POWER: We received 1,205.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many are outstanding from that list?

L. POWER: There are 199 still in process.

L. O'DRISCOLL: The other ones are settled – done?

L. POWER: The others are closed.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Can we get a list of the active OHS investigations that are ongoing now?

S. STOODLEY: Sean Dutton.

CHAIR: Sean, just give it a second. Wave again.

S. DUTTON: Active OHS investigations that could lead to a charge, I don't believe we track that or would announce it.

When a charge is laid, then there'll be a notification after the sheriff has served the papers and we do a public advisory at that time. All of the notices around those charges are all collated in a single location on our website.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Are all school buses currently inspected?

G. BOLAND: Yes. It's posted online. There was a 93 per cent pass rate.

L. O'DRISCOLL: A 93 per cent pass rate means that when they did their inspection and then you do one, there was 93 per cent to go back to them to be reinspected?

G. BOLAND: It's 93 per cent at the time of inspection were compliant.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Oh, okay. Sorry.

What happened to the investigation into the bus that lost an axle while carrying children in Mount Pearl in 2023?

S. STOODLEY: Sean Dutton.

CHAIR: Sean.

S. DUTTON: That's a question for the police services. They conducted the investigation.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Does it come back to you when it's complete? Is that the —?

S. DUTTON: No, highway enforcement would have supported law enforcement in conducting the investigation.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Do you have questions to how that happened on the inspection?

They're going to do their job to say, okay, an axle fell off. They're going back to check the inspections and see what happened and get a report on that; you don't get a report on that?

G. BOLAND: We would provide any copies of inspection reports to the investigating officer and, of course, the bus would not be put back into service until it was 100 per cent compliant, if it could be put back in service.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Hey, listen, I worked in garages and there are mistakes that can be made. Is it a mistake? Is it something that's faulty? The public would like to know what happened and how did the axle come off? What was the result of that?

Okay, there's the investigation, we see that, but the investigation is over. What actually happened? How can we prevent that again?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

I mean, I certainly understand what you're saying. Unfortunately, I don't have all the details of the accident fresh to mind but law enforcement investigated. We would support the law enforcement investigation and this department would not allow any buses to operate until they were fully compliant with an inspection.

We would support the law enforcement's criminal investigation.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

We're going to move on. Your time is up, MHA O'Driscoll.

We're going to go to MHA Brown.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Can we get a status update on the rollout of the speed camera program as of to date?

CHAIR: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: As announced a few weeks ago, the contract was awarded to Jenoptik and there's a minimum of 10 cameras to be installed.

We're working out those plans now with the vendor. They have to come down and they will visit the suggested locations throughout the entire province, do a site assessment and then they'll start with the installation of the cameras.

In the meantime, we have our IT folks working behind the scenes, working with the vendor, about how to get our systems integrated so that the tickets can be issued.

So that's where we're to.

J. BROWN: Thank you so much.

Over the last couple of sittings, I guess, of this session of the House of Assembly, there was legislation brought about, amendments to self-regulating professional bodies.

Are there any other self-regulating professional bodies that will be receiving updates like the other ones that have received them in the last couple of years?

S. STOODLEY: Well, I guess, I can't reveal to the House the legislation prior to being introduced to the House, if there are any upcoming changes.

OFFICIAL: That's what I was going to say.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

It's a great question but that's our job and it goes through the Cabinet process. Once they can be revealed publicly then they'll be introduced in the House.

Thank you.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you.

Is the department doing any work or investigation on amendments or changes to regulation of housing – evictions or anything like that – given the changing of the demographic of the housing market in the last number of years? Is any work being done to actually improve regulation or anything like that or is it status quo?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Back in the department now, this is my first full day back in the department, certainly something we'll take a look at again. I know the team are always looking at what other provinces are doing, monitoring rental rates across the country, monitoring the effectiveness of our system, working with the Department Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. If we see that there are any changes that the government thinks are appropriate to make, then we would make them. It's something that we always monitor.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

I know in 2022, the Rothschild report regarded the potential of selling the registries. At this time, is the department looking at privatizing the registries or has the decision been made to keep it in-house?

S. STOODLEY: There are no plans right now to change the status quo.

J. BROWN: Thank you so much.

Can we get a number of how many child care inspectors there currently are and how many inspections were conducted this year of regulated day homes and daycares across the province? Is that public information too, once they're inspected?

S. STOODLEY: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: I don't have the exact numbers here but we would do that under a memorandum of understanding. It would be our environmental health officers who would complete those inspections.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you.

Right now, are there any plans to update the legislation or regulations surrounding the creation and administrative of co-ops in this province?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I can certainly take that away and have a look but, at the moment, our process is, if we feel like a change to the legislation or regulations, we'll bring it forward and we'll come to this House.

I don't think we have anything on the Order Paper now. I'll certainly take that away and have a look.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

Could we get an overview of any expansion of the French language services that your department has completed in the last year?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We signed an agreement with the federal government – all provinces did – essentially to give flow-through funding to community organizations to help with translation services. That is in progress and working well.

We've seen organizations do more translation, like Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, but that is the extent of the expansion. We haven't added any more team members. It's just kind of the flow through of additional federal government funding to organizations to help with translation.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

Has the death notice project been completed and, if so, can you give us a description or a rundown of how that's currently working?

S. DUTTON: That project was implemented two or three years ago. It's working fine and it's a model for other provinces who are interested in adopting a similar approach, particularly those who are still largely paper based.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you so much for that.

Has the department considered making it mandatory for landlords to go to mediation before they can evict a tenant?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the policy suggestion.

That's not something that's currently being implemented but we'll certainly consider that. Thank you.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you, Minister.

I know in January there was a report about the lack of enforcement for landlord-tenant disputes. In the past you stated that there would be work on a pilot project, has that been implemented? Do we have any results from that yet?

S. STOODLEY: My understanding is that it's still in development.

Okay, Loyola.

L. POWER: Yes, part of the program is started, specifically in relation to the education components.

I think, as mentioned previously as well, again it's about the about the continuous assessments and evaluations of data to see where our next steps go. It's absolutely in process.

J. BROWN: Perfect. Thank you so much.

Have there been any reports brought to the department of accusations to businesses about price gouging this year? Has there been any investigation or fines brought in that process?

L. POWER: Thanks for the question.

Again, any complaint that comes to our division is investigated. Again, there's nothing specific at this point in time to share, but it's, again, a continuous piece that we get on a regular basis and any complaint, we follow up on.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you.

Can we get a list of or at least the number of complaints that were filed in the last fiscal year?

L. POWER: Yes, we'll provide that for you.

J. BROWN: Thank you so much, my friend.

How many files have been resolved in the past year of money allocated by the province for outstanding debt and how much has been recovered under the collection services?

L. POWER: There's been approximately \$74 million collected.

J. BROWN: Perfect.

How much is outstanding right now?

L. POWER: About \$200 million.

J. BROWN: Thank you so much.

All right, perfect. That's my final question for this subhead.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

I'll start with speed cameras this time. It's taken over five years since the legislation came in to get them in. In the original press release, when it was passed, it included school bus zones and construction zones. Why were they omitted?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

No one wants speed cameras in more places than I do, as fast as possible. We are working with other departments, like the Department of Education, to put in the cameras on the arms. I will say we spent a lot of time working with Justice and Public Safety. Because the taking the picture of the

licence plate is the easy part. The hard part is that has to flow through systems to figure out who it is and that has to go to Justice and they have to give a ticket and then the Justice piece – which I'm not sure if they probably talked about it in Estimates.

That is a significant transformational change to how tickets are – it poses a significant change to the Justice and Public Safety system and the ticketing operations. As a government, we wanted to make sure that that was implemented appropriately. I don't want to break the justice system. That did not happen as quickly as I personally wanted it to, but it happened, we are there now and so I'm going to be working with Education to try and get them on school bus arms and red light cameras.

This is my first day back, so I have to get up to speed on all that and see how I can drive that. But it's critically important and we do have the right changes now in progress for the Justice and Public Safety system to make sure that the tickets can be managed and executed appropriately.

L. O'DRISCOLL: On the trial that we had last summer, I think, or the summer before – last summer – what was the revenue potential generated out of that? I thought the number was \$21 million, but did you have a number on that?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

The pilot was three cameras. We didn't issue notifications for every one. The municipalities were issuing the notifications. It changed as the pilot went through, because they were maximizing the HR resources that they had. Towards the end of the pilot they had, I think, a full-time person just sending out warnings. They were limited to how many warnings they were sending out at the end to how much capacity this one full-time staff member had. Now that that will be automated and that would be managed by the third party vendor, we won't have that burden on the municipalities.

So yes, you could extrapolate how many notices and how many fines that would have been. I don't have the math done. I mean, you could do the math on that.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, I know. I'm just trying to extrapolate how much revenue that would be in a three-month or six-month period, and then you do that over a year, and you should be able to get a general number. That's all estimates obviously, but it's interesting to see how much would have been in there for that time period.

S. STOODLEY: Get your calculator out.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah.

Will they be used on red lights?

S. STOODLEY: Pardon?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Are you going to use the cameras on red lights?

S. STOODLEY: There are red light cameras, and that is another area where we look forward to working with municipalities on that.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Is that going to be implemented when the cameras come out now? There are 10 cameras. Is that a part of those 10 cameras?

S. STOODLEY: My understanding is that the 10 cameras are speed cameras, not on red lights, but that is something that we will be working on.

L. O'DRISCOLL: You can speed through red lights, too.

S. STOODLEY: I'm with you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: At what speed will the cameras be set? I think I do have the answer, but I'd just be sure that I get it on record here.

S. STOODLEY: Eleven – no.

Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: It would not be prudent for us to publicly advise the trigger speed by which a camera would be taking a picture.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, but it'd be nice to know. You're going to have signs up to know where there to.

S. STOODLEY: Sean Dutton.

S. DUTTON: The speed limits are established in law, and there are fines established in law. None of that has changed, and there will be signs where every camera is put up, so there will be no surprises. This is not intended to trick people. They will know where it is, and the speed limit is what the speed limit is in law.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Why is this costing \$4 million?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

There are numerous different implementation models. There's a cost to have a vendor put up the cameras, maintain the cameras, fix the cameras in a snow storm, take the photos, work with Motor Registration, send out the tickets. There are mail costs. Then we're also having the vendor go through the core process when someone wants to contest a ticket, the vendor's going to be doing that, and so we did an RFP and that is the cost for starting out for that vendor.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How does it ramp up? Will the cost go to \$8 million if you get 20 cameras?

S. STOODLEY: I am not sure of the contract.

Sean Dutton.

S. DUTTON: Part of the overall cost of the initiative is additional staffing in Fines and Administration at the Department of Justice and Public Safety. The contract is structured such that the vendor is charging back for the cost of registered mail to send the tickets to confirm that they have been delivered and in the event that there's a

solution found to do electronic serving, then we will be able to back out that cost.

I couldn't say that it will necessarily double or increase by a certain rate because, ideally, there'll be an electronic solution found in the near future, but we didn't want to stop proceeding while that's continuing to be worked on.

L. O'DRISCOLL: We've had a couple of announcements, and we all know what happens there. When will they be going out? I mean, we had an announcement three or four weeks ago. When is it actually coming into place?

S. STOODLEY: We signed the contract with the vendor. They are currently evaluating the spots and are working to put the cameras in, shortly.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Any timeline?

S. STOODLEY: Weeks.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Where will the fines go that are collected? Where will they go to?

S. STOODLEY: They'll go to general revenues, the same place as all the fines go now.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

How much does the department expect? How much do you expect to collect on this? Is there an anticipated value, going from other districts that you may know?

S. STOODLEY: Ideally, there is no revenue collected because, ideally, the cameras are a reminder to people that they should be following the law and obeying the law has no cost associated with it. Anyone can do some math. It depends on the number of cameras. We don't yet know how much the cameras are going to change people's behaviour. Ideally, they change people's behaviour significantly. Any guess is a wild guess that anyone can work out with some math.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, I would have to say that in most communities, where I live, in rural Newfoundland, a lot of them, with these cameras that the schools have either outside their school areas and the cameras in the communities – I live in the community of Bay Bulls. There's one in Witless Bay. There's one in Mobile and they work very well. The problem is when they start flashing you're over the speed and you're slowing it down, it does slow people down. I know you can't have them in every single community. Of course, that's the Department of Transportation has some of those, but they definitely do work, I can guarantee you, they do work, when you're driving along there.

How does the administration process work now? You explained it a little bit that time. Ticket gets flashed and what's the process then from that?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

If the speed camera is triggered, there's a photo taken and then the vendor is analyzing that licence plate. They work from an IT perspective, that goes through Motor Registration to match the mailing address of the registered owner of the vehicle and then Jenoptik, the vendor, will be sending a ticket to the registered owner of the vehicle. They can contest that; they can and should pay it.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Who do you pay the ticket to? Is it the same – I'm not sure if it's –

S. STOODLEY: The Exchequer.

L. O'DRISCOLL: – the Exchequer, yeah. I think that's what it used to be.

What if someone wants to contest a ticket, how does that work?

S. STOODLEY: That would be the same process as they would contest a ticket today, through the justice system in Traffic Court.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Is the Traffic Court staffed up and ready to deal with this? That would be under Justice, I would think.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, that's why it's taking so long.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right. Well, I'll wait for my next question.

Ten seconds, I guess last one: Are all storage facilities up to code and inspected, like tank farms and stuff like that?

OFFICIAL: Storage of what?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Storage facilities for oil tanks, the tank farms and stuff like that.

S. STOODLEY: Pressure vessels?

OFFICIAL: That's the data you put on the website last week.

G. BOLAND: Oh, okay. Sorry.

Yeah, last week we were happy to post some information online about environmental occurrences, so a leaky fuel tank for example, as well as the registration information about our fuel tanks. That's all posted online now.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR: Your time is up, MHA O'Driscoll.

MHA Brown?

J. BROWN: I'm done with this subhead.

CHAIR: You're finished with this section?

MHA O'Driscoll, do you have any further questions on this section?

L. O'DRISCOLL: No.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to recall the subheadings, please.

CLERK: 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 1.1.01 to 1.2.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 1.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to call the next subheadings, please.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03.

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you. I'll continue with some of the questions I have here first and then I will get into some numbers and stuff for sure.

How much uptake has there been on people drawing out their money on fixed investments due to financial hardship? I know I've had some calls myself and people looking to do it.

S. STOODLEY: I guess I will say, and then I'll pass it over to Loyola, we did introduce changes to the pensions act to allow people to withdraw LIRAs and – I can't remember all the wording off the top of my head – that kind of fixed locked-in pension.

I believe there are four types. They're listed on our website and I believe the financial institutions provide us with reports after the fact.

Loyola.

L. POWER: We'll be able to provide you with that information from our Pensions director.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

In that, would you be able to provide how many people did it this year?

L. POWER: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And what the average dollar value was, if you knew that?

S. STOODLEY: I don't know if we collect dollar value.

OFFICIAL: We have the statistics but no ones been asking a specific dollar amount.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

What's the latest with the taxi insurance? How does that work now in general?

S. STOODLEY: There's been no change recently to taxi insurance. They're not required to use Facility. They can find a broker to get them a rate.

We did make a change in this House to remove profit on Facility. That would put a downward pressure on insurance rates if taxis are using Facility.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How has your rideshare program gone so far?

S. STOODLEY: My personal opinion, it's gone very well. Uber, in particular, just announced they were expanding across the province. We have small local vendors as well and I use ridesharing as a service. I believe it's been well accepted. I know it's been a challenge for the taxi industry.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Has the department gotten any complaints with it?

S. STOODLEY: No.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Has the department done any further analysis on bringing back mandatory MVIs?

S. STOODLEY: I can speak to this from my perspective.

What you're asking is mandatory vehicle inspections. It was probably 30-something

years ago now we did have mandatory vehicle inspections in Newfoundland and Labrador. When I lived in the UK, they had mandatory yearly vehicle inspections, MOTs they were called, where we paid 50 pounds, so \$100 a year because we had an older car and we had to take it to a garage. You and I have talked about this at length and happy to chat further.

I guess firstly, you're introducing a new yearly cost for everyone with an older vehicle or every two-year cost. We look at: Is that something that provides public safety value to people? When you look at the available data from crash reports, the data does not show that vehicle maintenance causes crashes; that's the other thing.

The other thing that I keep thinking about is, right now, there are people who don't pay insurance, that don't have registration, that are on the roads unlawfully. Those same people are going to be the same people who don't do the annual vehicle inspection. Those are the same people who don't keep up the maintenance on their vehicles.

I think your law-abiding people, who follow the law, they have insurance. They registered their vehicles. They get their vehicles maintained. Those are the people who are already maintaining their vehicles. So my personal opinion is that mandatory yearly inspections don't get at the people who are not following the laws now, the people who are not keeping their vehicles up to date, and there's no demonstrated public safety imperative to impose an additional \$80 or \$100 cost on everyone with an older vehicle every year.

That's why I personally have not brought that forward.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, I'm not saying it has to be yearly; like yearly at a certain point. We've had that discussion many times.

I got a person that's in my house from the UK and he's surprised that it's not a yearly inspection. I said: Well, I don't see the point of yearly inspection if the car – I've sold cars. If it's five years old and 150,000

kilometres maybe or 100,000, whatever that number is, fine but after that.

You're sort of saying that it's generally the same people and I would say it's not. Being in the industry, there are lot of cars come in that they just want a grease and oil. They don't want anything else done. They can't afford it is right. It's no doubt. I don't want to pass more costs but there's a safety aspect and you just mentioned it.

One would be tires. People don't understand the tires tread depth ratings and in conditions like this morning, if you have a little flurry and you have your tires changed over to 4/30 seconds of tread wear, and it's supposed to be 11 or 12 on a tire – low-profile tires are probably nine or 10 – and the tires are worn, then that's a safety aspect. Checking that is what you're doing. When I was there it was \$150 to get an inspection. It's probably more now but I'm just trying to say that there's stuff there that could happen.

It has to be some number somewhere that a vehicle has to be inspected that's worthy of the road. It's safety; that's the bottom line. Again, we've had that discussion but it bothers me that people are driving these cars. I had one last year the engine went. It was a 2010 and it never had to be inspected, but I know there's a ball joint gone or tires. There has to be something done to that vehicle to get it either inspected or off the road if it's not fit to be on it.

Sometimes that's what we're looking at in some of these accidents. It's not always the people that we're tending to blame that have no insurance and no registration; it's more than that.

Do you have any legislation for e-scooters and e-bikes in the process?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

The government proposes legislation and once it's ready to show Members, then it gets tabled in the House. So I don't have anything further to reveal on that at this time.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, a quick amendment we did helmet registration and it was pretty contentious on certain issues. But it wouldn't take a lot to add that to it, I wouldn't think. They're electric and they're fairly fast, so if you have to ride a pedal bike, how do we not add that to the list? Is there something that stops that or different regulations? But we put that in, I can't see how we wouldn't make an amendment to add that to it.

S. STOODLEY: I look forward to the Member's support if legislation comes forward.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, absolutely, guaranteed. But we'd like to have some say on it before it gets to the final regulation part.

But anyway I'll move on. Has the department done any further analysis on changing registrations to one plate owner? I've asked that every time I've been in here, I think.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, so I don't have the most up to date, but there are three major IT registration projects under way: MCP system, Motor Registration, and Fines Admin and student loans. OCIO was doing student loans first and then we're working through ours next. Once we have a new system, then it will be plate to owner.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Is there a timeline on that? I know that's a tough question, but anywhere that we're getting close?

S. STOODLEY: I don't have a timeline for public consumption. We're working as fast – this would be a major system for government, so it's not something that we can rush and we will do an excellent, thorough job in implementing an excellent plate to owner system.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I don't know if you'd consider it rushing it; I've been asking it since I've been in Service NL. So it's four years. It's just something that I could see – me personally, I see it working. Maybe there are downfalls to it from other areas that

have done it. But I could see it working from selling cars that when you trade in your vehicle, you took your vehicle plate back, that's yours. Then that person who gets it, no plate on the car that they buy, then it's easier to catch them, I'm going to say. They'll know right away.

S. STOODLEY: We're doing it.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, well, let's make it happen, that's good.

There was an issue last October with the St. John's firefighting trucks waiting on inspection. How did this happen?

S. STOODLEY: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: Yes, we were aware, and we worked with the St. John's Regional Fire Department to put a plan in place to get their inspections up to speed and to ensure that those were completed as required.

S. STOODLEY: I will add that it's the responsibility of the companies that have commercial vehicles to make sure that they're inspected. We don't go out and say oh, by the way, Loyola, you don't have your inspection done.

L. O'DRISCOLL: But then the same with school buses, they have their inspection done but then you have to do an inspection from your side as well to verify that.

S. STOODLEY: School bus is a different thing. Fire trucks are not the same as school buses.

L. O'DRISCOLL: But they were in that issue at one point in time, I think, is the same thing they were behind in inspections.

CHAIR: MHA O'Driscoll, your time is up now.

We're going to move on to MHA Brown.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

With Vital Statistics, has there been any updates with OCIO or anything like that for the improvements of operating Vital Statistics in the past year?

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, you are asking if there are IT improvements for Vital Statistics?

J. BROWN: Yes, I know that there was work in the past that was done. I was just wondering if any more work have been done with Vital Statistics to bring it to the modern age?

S. STOODLEY: We did the death notification project. There are always some small things they're working on. I don't have any updates.

J. BROWN: That's my final question under this subhead.

Thanks.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

CHAIR: MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Under 2.1.03, Purchased Services – I will get back to questions but I had one question in that section – \$861,000, went to \$1.1 million then back to \$854,000. What's going on there?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

You're asking 2.1.03, Purchased Services?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Purchased Services, yes.

S. STOODLEY: There was a decrease. We had a one-time reallocation of funding for the Canadian Conference of Personal Law Administrators that was reprofiled and then the amount was increased higher than anticipated debit, credit card fees associated with online transactions related to deed registrations.

I guess, as more people buy and sell houses, we incur higher fees to process the

credit card payments associated with filing documents with the Registry of Deeds and we had an increase in monthly fees for the personal property registry system.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I'll go back to some questions where I left off here. Is there an issue with trucking companies refusing to cross oncoming traffic to enter the weigh scales?

S. STOODLEY: I will say, in my tenure in this department previously, I did hear from companies and drivers who had concerns about different weigh scale positioning across the province. They are experts. I take their concerns very seriously.

When, I guess, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure looks at – I guess, I'll say my understanding is that there are objective measurements. To have a turning lane, you need this kind of site, you need this long and the distances required for things like turning lanes and hill and turns, those are not subjective and my understanding is the weigh scales that we have currently meet the standards for turning in and all that kind of stuff.

I have seen in instances there are other drivers not obeying the law, that is a concern. You know, speed cameras will help things like that. I guess right now from the provincial government's perspective, we're not making any changes to the weigh scales, but I do take the point of drivers having concerns. Although I also know that there are drivers trying to avoid stopping at the weigh scales.

We do have plans, like Drivewyze, where they can send their statistics electronically to the weigh scales and they don't have to stop. I guess I would encourage as many commercial drivers as possible to adopt that and then they don't have to slow down and stop at the weigh scales.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How is MyGovNL service going?

S. STOODLEY: Excellent.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I could verify that myself. I have to say I did register a vehicle in regard to online and I was a bit skeptical, I'm not going to lie, when I first saw that. I worked in service departments so you're always dealing personally with stuff and it's easier but when I went in online, it worked very well. I renewed my MCP and it was flawless and then within days. I would have to say from my perspective in both issues, it has been really good.

Number of users that are using it, you said 400,000?

S. STOODLEY: It was 407,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have MyGovNL accounts.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Any security concerns?

S. STOODLEY: None that I'm aware of, no.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Why does the department refuse to bring a practical component to an ATV safety training? An example would be, you go get your driver's permit, you have to go in and do a test to be able to drive, a permit, obviously, and then you do your licence and obviously be able to drive the car after a learning curve. We don't have that on ATVs. Is there something that you're planning on doing? I know you have to be 16.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question. I will add we did introduce a comprehensive suite of changes to off-road vehicles, on ATVs, including mandatory training.

We did develop and implement mandatory training – not in-person training but online training – for newly licensed drivers 16 and older, and then anyone supervising a young, 16-year-old driver, and then anyone who the registrar of Motor Registration, or anyone they feel should do the training or anyone who has demonstrated that they cannot safely drive an ATV.

I guess we would always continue to have discussions with our safety partners. We would take their recommendations and look

at the pass-fail rates and speak with law enforcement and consider any changes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, getting an ATV online and doing a permit or doing training is not going to help the person. The actual training is what I'm suggesting or saying that they should be going into motor vehicle and learning how to drive that vehicle. Doing it online is not going to teach them how to drive that vehicle, I can guarantee you.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the suggestion.

Three years ago there was nothing, so what we have today is significantly better than before. We're always looking at how to improve the safety for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, you would think, practically, you would be driving it rather than doing something online. To me, that's what I would say.

S. STOODLEY: Please outline now or in the future what that should look like and we will seriously consider it.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Do you have any statistics or numbers on accidents or fatalities on ATVs?

S. STOODLEY: That would be available through law enforcement.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Do you have any statistics tracking the number of helmet tickets issued? Do you know any numbers on that?

S. STOODLEY: That would be tracked by law enforcement, but we can certainly get that for you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Again, as we put these rules in it's like anything, enforcement is the issue. I'm sure that's Justice and Public Safety, but we can put all the rules in we like, we have to get together on that as well.

Does the government have any plans to regulate the cosmetology industry as well, nail studios and stuff like that? There's been an issue come up.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

I know that we work with the Department of Health and Community Services. We, I believe, had a – Sean Dutton?

S. DUTTON: All workplaces are subject to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and any public health concerns can be a subject of an environmental health officer inspection.

I think what you're describing is whether they would like to become a self-regulatory organization. They have no existing association today of which I am aware. That is really a choice for the people in the industry to pursue and we don't have any proposal from anyone to pursue that sort of legislation. Health and Community Services has legislation, but I think it is only applying to tattoos and others of those kind of more – I mean, they're cosmetic but it's not to do with fingernails or anything of that nature.

S. STOODLEY: Body modification.

S. DUTTON: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Maybe something to look at if they're opening up a business and they're going to be putting chemicals on, they're looking for a permit, obviously, to go in and do this industry, maybe it's something that could be in the questions. If they're applying stuff to their skin that's causing rashes and stuff, okay, it's health and safety, but they're getting a permit to do this.

Are there rules and regulations that you may put in place?

S. STOODLEY: That's a lot of red tape you're adding here, too, I just want to add.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It hasn't got any better.

S. STOODLEY: Part of stopping red tape is stopping it in the first place.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It hasn't got any better. That's the first thing when you say the red tape. I mean, we've been in here dealing with speed cameras for five years. You're reducing red tape and it's five years to do that.

S. STOODLEY: We have the second lowest number of regulations and legislations in Canada, second to PEI.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, thank you.

Has the department received any complaints or so-called ghostbusters fraudulently selling insurance policies online since the CBC story on May 2, that you know of?

L. POWER: No, we haven't received any inquiries to date.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

CHAIR: MHA, your time is up. I don't think MHA Brown has any further questions on this section.

Would you like to add some more time?

L. PADDOCK: I have some questions.

CHAIR: MHA Paddock is going to ask some questions now.

MHA Paddock, we will set up in the system.

L. PADDOCK: So 2.1.01, Consumer and Financial Services: We come down to Purchased Services and my quick calculations, last year, we had an 18 per cent budget overspend. I am just looking for some explanation.

CHAIR: Minister Stoodley.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

The extra cost was due to additional debit-credit fees for online services. We had higher than anticipated membership and

association costs for the memberships that the department is a part of.

L. PADDOCK: Okay, I'm coming down to Revenue. Your revenue, my quick calculation, increased by 48 per cent last year, which is a good thing, but I'm just looking at, then, your budgeting for this new year is the same number as the previous year. I'm just looking again for some variance explanation.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We don't do anything to try to drive up revenue. This is, I guess, when people pay a fee for an application.

This, in particular, whenever there are more applications for hearings, for example, then the revenue would increase because we're collecting more money for the application for a hearing or dispute resolution. It's related to the number of applications we've received.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

2.2.01, Vital Statistics Registry, Revenue – Provincial: Last year on the provincial side, a 74 per cent increase in revenue – page 16. I'm just looking, again, for the variance explanation with regard to the 74 per cent increase last year, and then using the same budget number as the previous year.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We had a higher demand for the secure shipment of birth certificates. That's why there is extra cost.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

CHAIR: No more questions?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

CHAIR: MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: 2.2.03, Collection Services: Last year, there was \$247.5 million outstanding. You collected \$74 million I think you said and now there's \$200

million left. That number doesn't add up. I'm just wondering, where did that come from?

S. STOODLEY: I will say the number in the Estimates, this is kind of managed by the team. The money that's collected goes into general revenues. That doesn't come into our department; we're just collecting on behalf of the government and on behalf of various departments for money that will go into general revenues.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can you break that down by category, for example like student loans and where that number comes to, that number?

S. STOODLEY: Yes, we can get that for you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, perfect.

How much was collected last year and how many accounts are still outstanding?

L. POWER: Just to reiterate, it was approximately \$74 million collected and \$200 million outstanding, still being worked on.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

I had a couple of other questions here. Does the department have any opinion on the recent trend where a house is for sale, but the vendor has a right to not deal with others until a certain date and time? The vendor has declared no conveyance or offers until a certain date and time.

So what happens is now a person gets one offer and it's not like selling cars, because the price is the price, but now the houses are going up and up and up and the seller has all the power. Is there any consideration to any of that where the consumer is paying more and more and more? So the seller has all the power now.

S. STOODLEY: It sounds like what you're describing is kind of a normal ebb and flow in the real estate market where sometimes it's a buyer's market, sometimes it's a seller's market. I mean, we would work with

the real estate industry in terms of their legislation. I guess, at this point, we're not planning any changes related to that.

I'm sure soon it'll be a buyer's market; it'll be the opposite.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, that's not what I'm saying.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, I apologize.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It may be the way I'm asking it, too. If you have a house for sale and I make an offer on it, then you're going to say no, I'm not going to – well, you're just not going to say anything. So then you're getting someone else who is going to come in and give you a higher price. Now they know the price is just going up – he just offered \$500,000; I'm offering \$520,000. But the seller who owns the house is in control now, rather than you're going into a real estate office, you're putting your house up, you're putting in your prices and the highest price gets it. But now it seems like, no, I got \$520,000 for that, I'm going to get more.

Now it seems like you can't do that on vehicles, as an example, but it's happening in the housing market.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, you can.

My understanding of the real estate market, I put in an offer and it beats someone else's offer and so I bought at the higher price.

L. O'DRISCOLL: But the owner is the one that's controlling that now. Does that make sense to you that they can just keep rising the price?

S. STOODLEY: I think that's the way it works, supply and demand, yeah.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, cars don't work like that or other industries don't work like that is what I'm saying there. You can't go in, okay, your car is selling for \$50,000 and go in and offer \$55,000 and go in and offer \$60,000. But that's what they're doing on houses. It seems like the owners are in control.

Yes, I know that, but it just doesn't seem like the consumer has any control now whatsoever, it's just the highest bidder. There has to be some regulation or something. I don't know if it's a regulation, but it's wrong what's happening, I can tell you that.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for your suggestion.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes.

Let me see, I have one other one. A few years ago there was public controversy over a secret land agreement on Canopy Growth that ultimately never opened its doors. The deal involved a numbered company. The people of the province still don't know who is behind that particular company. All that is required is a mailing address and to declare a director, who is often a lawyer.

Why won't government give people the right to know who owns numbered companies?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

Every province allows companies that have a number. There is no requirement to disclose to government the ownership of those companies. We did have a change in legislation whereby companies are required to keep their own records of who their majority shareholders are for the purposes of giving that to law enforcement.

I know that, historically, there has been some federal government change around disclosure of ownership within companies, but, provincially, we're not planning any changes. I know that the way you framed it sounds shocking but, this is the status quo across Canada in terms of company ownership.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I didn't frame it that way, that's the way it is. That's the understanding but, again, just because everybody else may think it's right, it may not be right.

That's it for this section.

CHAIR: That's it for this section.

No more questions, Mr. Brown?

L. PADDOCK: I have two quick questions.

CHAIR: MHA Paddock.

L. PADDOCK: 2.2.02, King's Printer: We had a 20 per cent reduction in revenue forecast for last year. Again, looking for the variance explanation.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

The King's Printer does all the printing for government. They also do all the printing for Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. They had less demand last year and there was a reduction in revenue. They don't go out looking for work, but, I guess, there's a \$7,900 reduction in the amount of work that they did for pay. From Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services for an example.

CHAIR: MHA Paddock.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Then 2.2.03, Collection Services, line item Purchased Services, an approximate three-fold increase. Just looking for some explanation on the variance.

S. DUTTON: The increase was due to higher than anticipated legal statement of claims that were filed through the courts related to collection's activities. If you go to the Justice Estimates for the courts, they will have the corresponding revenue, so it's really a wash. But the courts felt that government had to be treated the same as other collecting parties, so that's why we have to have a cash transaction.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

CHAIR: MHA Paddock, do you have further questions?

L. PADDOCK: That's good.

CHAIR: I ask the Clerk to recall the subheadings, please.

CLERK: 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 2.1.01 to 2.2.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 carried.

CHAIR: I'm just wondering if you need a break or we will continue on; it's just one more subheading.

S. STOODLEY: We're good to keep going.

CHAIR: Okay, we will continue on.

I ask the Clerk to call the final set of headings.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: 3.1.01 to 3.4.02.

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

Under Motor Registration, 3.1.01, how many vacancies does that division have now?

S. STOODLEY: Gail Boland.

G. BOLAND: As of March 31, there were 14 vacancies for Motor Registration.

L. O'DRISCOLL: What locations? How many different locations? Are they across the Island?

G. BOLAND: Motor Registration, that would include Mount Pearl, Grand Falls-Windsor and Corner Brook.

OFFICIAL: And the weigh scales.

G. BOLAND: Yes, that would include all the weigh scales.

L. O'DRISCOLL: And the weigh scales as well and there are some in each division, in each of those?

G. BOLAND: Yes, they're scattered. Most of the vacancies tend to be clerical and Mount Pearl.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, perfect.

What's the current breakdown of online versus traditional office visits now? Do you have a breakdown on that?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I know just after COVID we were seeing 98 per cent of vehicle renewals, registration renewals online. I'm not sure what the most recent percentage is, but it's available. I know you still have to come in now once every 10 years for a new photo. There are still times you do have to come in, but we try and lessen that. There are a lot of seniors, for example, who enjoy coming in, and that's part of the era routine and seeing people and socializing.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I would have to say that there's a fair lineup into motor vehicle when I was in one time this summer; I brought back an old plate. It's more than just vehicle registration that goes on in that building, obviously. I mean, there are transfers, I would think and – can transfers be done online?

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It can? You have to have a copy of your inspection to be able to transfer?

S. STOODLEY: You can upload that, yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Haven't done that yet. That's a question I had myself.

Has the department ever considered piloting Saturdays and off Mondays as an example for people who working during the week?

S. STOODLEY: I know that during periods of high peak we do, we do work with the

union to see if there are options to have evening or other times. I guess that's an ongoing union discussion with the management and based on demand.

As we move more things online, I would say we're reducing the number of people who walk in for service. On the other hand, for example, Motor Registration in Mount Pearl, in that building, let's say, we have Vital Statistics there. There are other things to do in that building other than just Motor Registration.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, thank you.

Under 3.2.01, Purchased Services – I'll just make sure you find it first. Purchased Services went from \$47,000 to \$115,000. Can you explain that?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We had higher fees for secure cash collection, and we had to do additional training for the mechanical refrigeration code. The mechanical refrigeration code changed, and we had to do additional staff training for that. That's why we had extra cost there.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

Under 3.2.02, Regional Services, Purchased Services, \$40,000 went to \$180,000. What happened there?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We have the tool called SkillsPass, and that provides food safety inspection training. There are a few other courses in that tool. Service NL, I guess, was the heaviest user of SkillsPass. As a government, we thought that that was valuable training to provide the general public. That includes the renewal of SkillsPass for \$118,000.

We also had relocation expenses when we moved the office from Harbour Grace to Bay Roberts. We had some additional short-term vehicle rental costs and freight costs to transport water samples around the province.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Under 3.3.01, Occupational Health and Safety Inspections, I had a few questions there.

Any vacancies in the staffing?

S. STOODLEY: Sean Dutton.

S. DUTTON: As of March 31, there were 12 total vacancies in the division, and we've been continually hiring in that area as well as at MRD and throughout the department since that time.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

The AG report from June 24 stated that the department missed time frames to lay charges and companies walked away. What has been done to address this issue?

S. DUTTON: Sorry, can you clarify who said that?

L. O'DRISCOLL: It was the Auditor General report on June 2024.

S. DUTTON: I'm not familiar with that report.

We had an internal audit. Is that what you're describing?

L. O'DRISCOLL: It was the AG report from June 2024 stated department missed timeframes to lay charges and companies have walked away.

S. DUTTON: That's not my understanding. We had an internal audit carried out for Occupational Health and Safety and they made a series of recommendations, but that's part of Treasury Board Secretariat. I think the report was released under access to information and they made a number of recommendations, all of which are being implemented, and that included restructuring of the division.

All of those positions have now been formally classified and we're going through the competitive process to staff them on a permanent basis; but, in the meantime, we had established an investigations unit within

the division that's overseeing the investigations and they've had good success since that model has been adopted.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Has there been any additional staff hired or new processes put in place to ensure workplace fatalities get justice? Has there been any more additional staff that you've hired?

S. DUTTON: We're going through our restructuring and we're competing for the positions and they're being filled. In the meantime, work has been reassigned to focus in an investigations unit and we're working to fill all of the vacancies that we currently have in Occupational Health and Safety.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Can we get a list of those OHS investigations that are ongoing?

S. DUTTON: I don't believe that they are published on the website. We do publish data on inspections. I don't believe we publish data about investigations and we do publish data on charges. Whenever a charge is laid, then the sheriff serves the party who is being charged and then there's a public advisory issued and all of those are collated on our website. All the data on annual inspections is updated on a regular basis.

L. O'DRISCOLL: So it's not online, but is it something that we could get or is it something that you don't put out?

S. DUTTON: Well, I'm sure it may be something that the staff are aware of, the investigations that they are doing, but normally people find out first when they're being charged.

L. O'DRISCOLL: How many charges have been laid in the last year? Do you have that number?

S. DUTTON: We can certainly provide it because there was an advisory for each of those instances. It's all public information, that part, on the website.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, and this goes as far as 3.2, okay.

3.4.01, Assistance To St. Lawrence Miners' Dependants: How many recipients of that are there, do you know?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

There are currently 19 beneficiaries.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Nineteen?

3.4.02, Assistance To Outside Agencies: Can we get a list?

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

That's it for me under that section.

CHAIR: On that section, your time is just about up.

MHA Brown.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Can we get a breakdown of where the vacancies are in the Occupational Health and Safety inspectors? Where the locations of those vacancies are, what regions?

S. STOODLEY: Sean Dutton.

S. DUTTON: I can tell you that while two of them are in Wabush, that we've recently signed a board report. We have a series of recommendable candidates and we're working through the offer process to have them filled. So I'm hopeful that those will be filled in the not-too-distant future.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you so much.

We mentioned the restructuring of the OHS. How many vacancies are the result of the restructuring and what are the reclassifications that are being conducted?

S. DUTTON: Well, there are none related to the restructuring itself. Some of the roles have changed and the reporting

relationships. I think there were about eight positions, if I'm not mistaken, that had to get a decision on classification. So none of them went down from their previous classification and some were increased. We have OHS officer IIIs that are a CG40; some were 37 before. There's no negative impact on wages for those folks.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you.

What vacancy was currently the longest and hardest to fill within the department? What position do you see the longest with vacancy and hard to fill?

S. DUTTON: I'd say that the positions in Wabush have been the hardest to fill, and we've been working very aggressively to find people. Again, we have a suite of candidates now, so I'm hopeful that we'll have those filled very soon.

J. BROWN: With the increased reports of violence in health care against professionals, has there been any work done at OHS for investigation purposes of this or any investigations done into this?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

I will add, and I'll pass it over to Gail, but the president of the Nurses' Union is the chair of our Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council at the moment.

Gail, do you want to add anything?

G. BOLAND: Yes, we've partnered with various associations in the health care sector as well as the union representatives and WorkplaceNL to conduct blitzes targeting the frequent workplace issues that we see both health and safety. Health care sector is a workplace just like any other workplace where we would conduct our regular inspections and respond to any complaints and conduct investigations, should any serious injury or fatality occur.

J. BROWN: Perfect.

The same goes, I guess, with the increase of violence in schools. Has the same work

have been done in the school system as well where violence is being reported to professionals?

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

J. BROWN: Perfect, thank you very much.

The Nurses' Union called for an independent health sector safety council, one that was suggested be imbedded into NLHS. Is there any work being done to look at this or is there a preferred model that government is looking into on this kind of pursuit?

S. STOODLEY: I think that would be WorkplaceNL. Again, the president of the Nurses' Union is chair of our Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council so, I guess, she would be really well placed for the council to recommend legislative changes to us, to our Occupational Health and Safety legislation, if the committee felt like that there was opportunity there.

J. BROWN: Perfect.

That was my final question for this subhead.

Thank you.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

CHAIR: MHA Paddock, do you have any questions?

L. PADDOCK: Certainly.

We'll start with 3.1.01, Motor Vehicle Registration. I come down to Purchased Services and the increase to just over \$4 million for this year. I take it that's probably your speed contract but I just –

S. STOODLEY: Correct, yes.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

From last year to this, it's an increase of \$2 million. Is that all the speed –?

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

You're talking about Purchased Services, 3.1.01?

L. PADDOCK: Correct.

S. STOODLEY: Okay.

Yes, we had a \$2.2-million increase cost for speed cameras and then we also have higher anticipated credit and debit card fees, \$71,000 and we had a price increase in the encumbrance for driver's licence cards, \$94,000.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Now looking at, I guess, variance on the revenue side, and which, I guess, is important to continue to look at, given potential some of the risk here. First of all, on the federal side, an approximate 65 per cent reduction last year. Can you explain the variance?

S. STOODLEY: It was less federal government funding, \$121,000 less revenue from the federal government.

It was one-time money for MRD to buy safety equipment. We got the money, and now we're getting less. We didn't get that money this time. The federal money gave us money last year to buy extra equipment, and they didn't give us that money this year.

L. PADDOCK: Yeah, but your budget for this current year is still showing then, back to \$191,500. I'm just, again, looking for –

S. STOODLEY: She'll correct me if I misspoke. Apologies.

J. TORRAVILLE: That difference in the revenue was based on the five-year agreement that we had for national safety code. That variance is a hold-back that they did 10 per cent over the total amount, so we will receive that in '25-'26. It's a timing variance.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Revenue, provincial side, was down 35 per cent.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

The \$7,000 decrease related to fewer requests for expedited driver's licence delivery.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Coming over to 3.2.01, Printing Inspection And Support Services. Support Services revenue, an approximate, by my mental math, 16 per cent reduction. Again, just looking for the variance explanation, and you're using the same number again as the previous year.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

We had a decrease in revenue because we had a decrease in requests for inspections, licensing and permits. We didn't issue as many permits so there would be less revenue.

L. PADDOCK: Okay.

Then 3.3.01, Occupational Health and Safety Inspections, again, revenue at provincial side, again my mental math, approximate calculation around 13 per cent reduction. Just looking for explanation on the variance.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

We had lower cost recovery of revenue due to reduced expenditures. Some of our Occupational Health and Safety costs get paid for from the worker injury fund –

OFFICIAL: All of it.

S. STOODLEY: Sorry, all the costs come from the worker injury fund. There's some accounting math that – I don't know if anyone wanted to add anything?

J. TORRAVILLE: This variance for the revenue is twofold. We get 100 per cent recovered from WorkplaceNL and the billing, of course, for the last quarter are off. We will receive all of that in the new year. There are two outstanding billings for '24-'25 that we will receive.

L. PADDOCK: Okay, that explains the roughly 13 per cent increase into the new estimate for revenue.

That's good.

CHAIR: MHA Brown, do you have any further questions?

MHA O'Driscoll.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay, I just have two more questions and then I'll be done with the questions.

People are getting higher insurances \$300 to \$600 to \$700 higher. Is there any concern in the department with that? Do you get many calls saying, it was increased last year and now it's gone up another \$300?

S. STOODLEY: Which type of insurance were you talking about?

L. O'DRISCOLL: Homeowner insurance policies.

S. STOODLEY: I have received complaints about homeowner insurance, but homeowner insurance is not something that we regulate. We regulate auto insurance. We don't regulate home insurance. There are some houses that are not able to get home insurance. It's not something that we regulate. That is actuarial driven as the cost of replacement, cost of fixing, building materials go up, but we do not regulate home insurance.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Just one other question. What's the cost of changing the name of the department for you guys? Is there a cost associated with that when you change the names from departments?

S. STOODLEY: My personal opinion is that we probably won't go through an exercise of renaming every car. We'll have to see what that looks like, maybe as needed. As things come up for a refresh, we'll change the name. I guess that's not my first priority is making sure the name is changed on everything.

Thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: That's it for me.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, I ask the Clerk to recall the subheadings.

CLERK: 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall 3.1.01 to 3.4.02 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.4.02 carried.

CHAIR: Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Digital Government and Service NL, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the Estimates of Digital Government and Service NL carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Digital Government and Service NL carried without amendment.

CHAIR: All right, so that ends this session from the department. First, I want to thank everybody for coming this morning and I am going to ask the minister if she would like to have some closing remarks.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I just want to thank the previous minister of Digital Government and Service NL who did an excellent job and I look forward to getting back up to speed on all of the files and seeing a few new areas we can improve as per our new mandate of Modernization and Service Delivery.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Does anybody else have any further questions or wanted to speak?

All right, I'm going to call for a motion to adjourn and, again, thank you everybody for coming this morning.

I look for a motion.

MHA Hutton; seconded by MHA Paddock.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Thank you very much. The next meeting will be at the call of the Chair. I think that's it for us. Have a good day.

On motion, the Committee adjourned sine die.